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SUBJECT: SUDAN/UGANDA/DRC: PREPARATIONS FOR UN U/S EGELAND
MEETING WITH LRA'S KONY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs (USYG) Jan Egeland departed Juba November 12 for a meeting with Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) chief Joseph Kony on the Sudan-Congo border. Before the meeting, Egeland had expressed serious doubt about whether it would actually occur. Egeland traveled to the rendezvous point with a large group, including Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Vice President Riek Machar and members of the LRA delegation to GoSS-mediated peace talks with the Government of Uganda (GOU). Kony appeared after several hours of waiting. The UN official then pressed for an agreement that the LRA would release an unspecified number of women, children, and sick people to his custody. The LRA balked at the request, claiming they have no wounded and no civilians-- only combatants. Egeland later said he would have settled for a statement of goodwill from the LRA and a promise of future releases, which he did not get. End Summary.

Egeland Ready to Meet Kony

¶2. (SBU) Egeland told the press in Juba he would "speak to anybody, anywhere, if it advances the humanitarian cause." The senior UN official, due to leave his post by the end of the year, is making what is likely to be his final visit to Sudan and Uganda. Though LRA representatives requested a meeting between Joseph Kony and the UN official, they balked at requests that the LRA release an unspecified number of women, children, and sick people to Egeland's custody, claiming no one wanted to leave. LRA second-in-command Vincent Otti had earlier said the release of women and children would clear the way for the UN to "bomb" the rebel group. After subsequent direct discussion with Otti, UN officials said they were optimistic that the LRA would issue a statement of goodwill and, at minimum, promise future releases. However, this did not occur.

¶3. (SBU) Egeland met separately November 11 with GoSS VP Riek Machar, the GOU delegation to the peace talks, and LRA representatives. Egeland said he had come to support the talks and push for more progress. He praised the GOSS for spearheading an "Africa-led" peace initiative, now receiving financial and other support from "half a dozen" countries. Both sides had respected the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, Egeland said, and there had been "no major attacks" since last August. He called on the international community to provide additional support for the process, citing specifically the need for international monitors, and for adequate food, water, and other provisions at designated LRA assembly points. Under the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, LRA forces east of the Nile are required to assemble at Owiny-Kibul, on the Sudan-Uganda border, and

those west of the Nile must gather at Ri-Kwangba, on the border between Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Though information is spotty and sometimes contradictory, there are apparently few LRA forces currently assembled at either location.

¶4. (SBU) Egeland and his group met the LRA outside the village of Nabanga, near the Ri-Kwangba assembly point in southern Sudan's Western Equatoria State. Both locations are a few kilometers from the DRC border and the Garamba National Park, where LRA chief Joseph Kony and deputy Vincent Otti are believed to be based.

Mediators, LRA Delegation Remain Behind

¶5. (SBU) Following Egeland's visit, the GoSS mediation team and the LRA negotiating team remained in Nabanga for further consultations with LRA leadership. After renewing the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement November 1, the parties reached an impasse over a draft agreement on measures to address "root causes" of the LRA conflict. The LRA negotiating team then requested time to consult with LRA leadership in the bush. The GOU acquiesced in this request. It was not immediately certain how long the LRA negotiators or the mediation team would remain in Nabanga.

¶6. (SBU) Ugandan Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda flew back to Juba November 11 to meet with Egeland, who is also expected to visit Darfur and Uganda during his current trip. Rugunda said he was "confident that a peace settlement that will be durable will come out of this process." Asked if recent attacks around Juba, some of which have been attributed to the LRA, had a negative impact on the

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talks, Rugunda said "on the contrary, it has increased the determination" of negotiators to reach a comprehensive agreement.

Jongomoyi Okidi-Olal

¶7. (SBU) U.S. citizen Jongomoyi Okidi-Olal participated in the November 11 meeting between Egeland and the Government of Uganda delegation, wearing a polo shirt with the words "Joint Chiefs of Staff/Pentagon" prominently visible. Invited by GOSS VP Machar to be an observer at the talks, Okidi-Olal has distributed business cards identifying himself as employed by the "U.S. Department of the Army." ConGen staff have notified Egeland, GoSS VP Machar, and GOU negotiators that Okidi-Olal is not representing the United States in any official capacity.

Comment

¶12. (SBU) Egeland is clearly trying to cast a favorable international spotlight on the LRA peace talks, and if his trip to the Congo border helped the chances for the eventual release of LRA captives it will have been worthwhile. The prospect of more direct consultations between LRA peace negotiators, GoSS mediators and the LRA's indicted leadership may be more significant in the long run. The sooner the LRA issue is resolved, and sooner attacks near Juba cease, the better for Southern Sudan's stability.

HUME